

# **Informal Learning as a Catalyst for Social Justice in Music Education**

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## **Abstract**

This chapter considers social justice in relation to the incorporation of a set of informal learning practices within the secondary school music classroom and teacher education. We interpret Nancy Fraser's view of social justice as "parity of participation" in order to suggest that the dialogical approach of informal music learning practices can potentially promote such participatory parity. We then examine Paulo Freire's concept of critical pedagogy, which emphasizes the need for teachers and students to participate together in the learning process so as to enhance critical consciousness. Through an application of Green's theory of musical meaning we suggest that critical consciousness in music can be aided through a deeper understanding of music's sonic materials and their inter-relations. Informal learning in the music classroom may promote both parity of participation and critical consciousness, with the potential to lead to a liberating musical experience.

Keywords: informal learning, social justice, critical pedagogy, critical consciousness, musical meaning.

## **Introduction**

Social justice is a term that has been understood in different ways and, consequently, its application has also been diverse (Fraser, 1995, 2001, 2005, 2008; Gould, 2007; Jorgensen, 2007; Sands, 2007). Jorgensen (2007) suggests the broader term "justice" instead of social

justice because “the notion of social justice may ... turn out to be limiting and exclusive in bypassing individual interests and perspectives in favor of emphasizing social considerations or the groups to which these individuals belong” (p. 176). In a way, Jorgensen alerts us to the dominance of a group and the silencing of minorities, as she also points out in the opening chapter of this book. Also questioning the subjugation of minorities by a dominant group, Gould (2007, p. 237) criticizes the liberal discourse of social justice that erases differences as a “façade of equality.” This tension between individual and group interests is reflected in the “decoupling of cultural politics from social politics, of the politics of difference from the politics of equality” (Fraser, 2001, p. 21).

On one hand, according to Fraser (1995, 2001), socioeconomic inequities have compelled those who understand social justice as a more just allocation of resources to see the redistribution of those resources as a remedy for injustice. On the other hand, those seeking an affirmation of specific cultural value need the recognition and the differentiation of that value to remedy injustice. These different views of injustice and of its remedies (justice) become problematic when they work against each other, as Jorgensen (2007) and Gould (2007) alerted.

In order to address such a contention, Fraser (2001, 2005) proposes a framework that accommodates both redistribution and recognition by treating “recognition as a question of *social status*” and not as a question of identity. Therefore, “what requires recognition is not group-specific identity but rather the status of group members as full partners in social interaction” (Fraser, 2001, p. 24, emphasis in original). She extends this notion of full partners in social interactions or of “parity of participation” to issues of redistribution, defending that “the distribution of material resources must be such as to ensure participants’ independence and voice” (Fraser, 2001, p. 29). Later, she includes the political dimension of representation in her framework, arguing that by...

Establishing criteria of social belonging, and thus determining who counts as a member, the political dimension of justice specifies the reach of those other dimensions: it tells us who is included, and who excluded, from the circle of those entitled to a just distribution and reciprocal recognition. (Fraser, 2005, p. 6)

Adopting Fraser's (2001, 2005, 2008) framework to understand social justice as involving "parity of participation", in which members of a social context interact with each other as peers, we argue that informal learning approaches within music education may offer grounds for such participatory parity through dialogical interactions between teachers and learners and between learners themselves. These "dialogues" require a role and attitude from both teachers and learners that challenges many formal educational assumptions, as teachers and learners are expected to contribute equally, but differently, in the learning process.

This attitude is also emphasized in the critical pedagogy of Paulo Freire (1974, 2000/1970), as the starting point of a process that reminds us that teachers can be agents of resistance against unjust and oppressive educational situations that may overlook the knowledge and interests brought to the learning experience by the learners. Freire summons teachers to work together with learners through a dialogical and problem-posing approach, within what should be a liberating education. This involves questioning and attempting to understand the world we inhabit, in relation to the transformations that are needed to ensure the right of being active subjects in control of our choices. In contrast to this approach, Freire criticizes what he calls the "banking model" of education, which reduces learners to the status of objects that passively receive knowledge "deposited" by teachers, as if depositing money in a bank, within a domesticating and oppressive education system.

A range of what may be termed “informal music learning practices” can, we argue, operate as a form of resistance to that banking model of education and, thus, contribute to a more just participation of the different members in the educational context. We also relate these practices with what Fraser (1995) calls transformative measures, in contrast with affirmative ones. While the latter correct “inequitable outcomes of social arrangements without disturbing the underlying framework that generates them... [the former corrects] inequitable outcomes precisely by restructuring the underlying generative framework” (p. 82).

In the first section of this chapter, we bring Fraser’s framework of social justice to the educational context and discuss the potential of informal learning in music education to promote parity of participation in musical practices. Besides acting to remove the barriers that might impede that participatory parity, we revisit Green’s (1988/2008a) theory of musical meaning to explain how our understanding of the sonic materials and of their inter-relations, allied to extra-musical values can offer an opportunity to deepen students’, as well as teachers’ understanding of those sonic materials in relation to re-thinking their extra-musical values, which may transform our musical experiences. In this sense, our musical understanding can potentially incorporate a more critical response to music, which helps us understand our own and other people’s musical worlds. This is paralleled to Freire’s idea that, as conscious beings, we “are not only *in* the world, but *with* the world,” (1970, p. 452, emphasis in original) in such a way that we can reflect, question and transform ourselves and our worlds, with the potential to free ourselves from unjust or oppressive relations.

In the second section of this chapter, we discuss how some informal music learning practices were “translated” into pedagogical practices by student teachers participating in a module delivered as part of a distance education program in Brazil aimed at music teacher education. We address examples of three distinct teaching approaches adopted by the

teachers, and consider them in relation to the discussion above. The program (Open University of Brazil) is part of a broader Brazilian educational policy aimed at expanding access to free higher education. As an example of a redistributive measure, distance education in Brazil is an attempt to raise the low rates of 14.4% (net) of youngsters aged 18 to 24 enrolled in higher education (INEP, 2012, p. 36).

The reasons for exclusion from higher education in Brazil are varied and complex and we do not deal with them here. Moreover, we are aware that the creation of more places via distance education and other educational policies, per se, will not ensure parity of participation in the socioeconomic, cultural and political spheres of any society. However, although distance education may be only a palliative measure to deal with inequitable access to higher education in Brazil, the fact is that programs currently in operation (since 2007 at the University of Brasilia) have been offered in two distinct modes: the traditional on-campus, face-to-face mode, and through distance education.

### **Informal Music Pedagogy: Participatory Parity Leading to a Potentially Liberating Educational Experience**

Informal music pedagogy does not refer to “an” approach but to the blossoming of a range of approaches over the last decade or two. In general these approaches tend to adapt different informal learning practices of various musicians outside the education system, bringing them, to differing degrees and in different ways, into formal settings<sup>1</sup>. Our own research has spanned the informal learning model in what is known as the Musical Futures movement (Green 2008a, 2014; [www.musicalfutures.org](http://www.musicalfutures.org); Hallam, Creech & McQueen, 2011; Jeanneret, McLennan & Stevens-Ballenger, 2011; Wright 2012) and a project bringing informal

learning into teacher-education at the Open University of Brazil offered by the University of Brasília (Narita, 2012).

Across these projects, amongst other things, we have taken to the formal context of education five main learning practices of popular musicians (see Green, 2001, 2008a), and applied them more-or-less directly to what the students are asked to undertake in the classroom. These are: choosing their own repertoire; copying the music by ear from a recording; learning in friendship groups through conscious and unconscious sharing of knowledge and skills; approaching whole “real-world” pieces of music involving finding their own way through the learning, rather than using music that has been simplified and structured progressively; and integrating the practices of listening, performing and composing, with an emphasis on creativity. Whilst the role of teachers is crucial (see Green 2014 for detailed examples), it differs from authoritarian models, since teachers take a more responsive and less instructional position. Hence, learners in this pedagogy take an active role in controlling their own musical practices and learning processes, which can lead to a deep understanding of their potential, needs, and the strategies they themselves develop to improve their learning.

In this chapter, we wish to focus on the dialogical relation between teachers and learners and between learners themselves that this kind of approach can engender. We assume “there is no complete knowledge possessed by the educator, but a knowable object which mediates educator and educatee as subjects in the knowing process” (Freire, 1971, p. 7). Hence, this dialogical knowing process involves collaborative teaching, in which teachers become “educator-educatee” and learners become “educatee-educators” (Freire, 1974, p. 127). Grounded in the lived experiences of the learners and showing respect for the knowledge and skills that they already possess, the teachers, as well as learning along with the learners, instigate the development of learners’ abilities, acting with them and not upon

them. The role and relationship between teacher and taught promoted in the informal learning model is also related to Freirean critical pedagogy by Wright and Kanellopoulos (2010, p. 74), who highlight its “more egalitarian and dialogic relationship.” It is worth mentioning that neither informal learning practices nor Freire’s pedagogy implies that the roles of teachers and learners are equal. In a dialogue with Gadotti and Guimarães, Freire clarifies:

The educator is different from the pupil. But this difference, from the point of view of the revolution, must not be antagonistic. The difference becomes antagonistic when the authority of the educator, different from the freedom of the pupil, is transformed into authoritarianism. (cited in Gadotti, 1994, p. 56-57)

Hence, without denying the teacher’s authority, informal learning in music proposes that learners’ knowledge and voices are manifested and represented in the educational context. It also involves collaborative learning, as peers find ways to organize themselves in groups, with the consequent emergence of group leaders and the development of new group cooperation strategies. Although we are aware of the various subjectivities that are involved in an educational scenario, and of the potential unequal power and participation that may lead to struggles of identity recognition, when subscribing to Fraser’s (2001) status model of social justice we do not aim at the recognition of a specific (group) identity; rather, “claims for recognition in the status model seek to establish the subordinated party as a full partner in social life, able to interact with others as a peer” (p. 25).

For example, to balance an educational situation in which learners able to read musical notation are considered “brighter” or “more musical” than those who do not read music, we need to promote parity of participation. We can do this by supporting those who do not read music to participate not necessarily in the same way, but in ways that are equally

fulfilling and equally recognized. Informal learning practices, with an emphasis on oral-aural learning, can counterbalance the dominance and the importance of musical notation skills, allowing the participation of non-musical readers on a par with readers (Green, 2008a). By this, we mean that the practices proposed did not require a specific musical ability that would prevent some who did not possess such an ability from participating and, in this sense, both readers and non-readers stood on an equal footing. It does not mean, however, that every learner will achieve the same result.

... the task involved what is known as ‘differentiation by outcome’. In other words, all pupils were set the same task, but it was adaptable to the differing abilities of individuals, not by virtue of being divided up into separate, progressive levels of difficulty, but according to what each individual produced as the outcome. (Green, 2008b, p. 187)

This adaptation to the various abilities of participants aided in making the informal learning practices accessible, inclusive, and potentially ensuring parity of participation of every learner. We say potentially because once in a group, participants’ values, knowledge, abilities and status are renegotiated and other inequalities may arise. However, insofar as inclusion in musical practices is concerned, the proposed task, (involving self-chosen music and group-directed learning as outlined earlier) met a first level of parity of participation.

This inclusion “should not be at the expense of academic rigour” because “academic achievement is crucial to pursuing economic justice, to fostering students’ future access to the material benefits of society” (Keddie, 2012, p. 33) and to expanding their worlds so that they can make informed choices. Therefore, participation of learners in the proposed musical practices is not a “concession,” but an educational act and, as such, should enable learners to go beyond what they already know, expanding their musical and general worlds,

(re)constructing, and revaluing the meanings attributed to their musical experiences, as a transformative practice.

### **Musical Meaning and the Classroom**

We wish to offer an understanding of students' musical experiences through a lens developed specifically with the classroom context in mind. According to Green's (1988/2008a) theory, musical meaning can usefully be conceived as a dialectical relation between two meaning-making processes that coexist and interrelate in every musical experience. One is what we will refer to as "inter-sonic" meaning<sup>2</sup> (Green, 2008a), which refers to the recognition and understanding of inter-relationships between musical materials such as intervals, chords, phrases and cadences. This is a learnt, historically-specific category which depends as much on the listener's prior experience as any other construction of meaning must do. That is, the level of listeners' familiarity and competence with a certain style of music correspondingly affects their ability to understand the inter-relationships of sonic materials within that style and to attribute some meaning to those materials. The other is called "delineated" meaning, referring to the relation of sonic materials to implicit or explicit extra-musical associations lying beyond the musical materials, such as ethnic, religious, or political connotations, which can be at a collective and/or an individual level (Green, 2005, 2006, 2008a).

In this formulation, one type of relationship to both meanings can be established when a) we are familiar or competent with a musical style so that we can correspondingly understand and attribute meaning to its inter-sonic materials and in this sense, we "know" the music and have "open ears"; and b) we can relate the music's delineations with something we agree with, identify with, or have good feelings about. This combination of such responses to both types of musical meaning would lead to musical "celebration." It is important to mention that such celebration is not necessarily a desirable outcome of all music education all

the time, since there are many cases where, rather than being celebrated, students could take a more critical stance to music. The other extreme of a musical experience would be musical “alienation”—which represents a state that, as with the alienation of the worker in classic Marxist theory, requires critical engagement in order to be thrown off. This would occur as a result of a lack of drawn relations to both inter-sonic and delineated meanings, in such a way that unfamiliarity with a musical style would prevent us from making sense of the sonic relationships on one hand, and we would not relate to this style’s delineations at all on the other hand (Green, 2006, p. 103).

In this model, musical experience can also be “ambiguous” if our responses to inter-sonic meaning do not correspond with our responses to delineated meaning. In other words, on the one hand we may be positive towards a certain musical style which is familiar, and in which we are able to finely decipher the inter-sonic arrangement and use of musical materials; but on the other hand we may be negative towards that same music’s delineations – for example, we may not identify or agree with the political use of this music or we may relate it with an unpleasant experience. In such a case we would be responding to inter-sonic meanings with a sense which to us, involves familiarity and understanding or other such generally welcoming frames of mind; but we would be responding to delineated meanings with a sense of dislike, being ‘thrown off’, or other such generally unpleasant states. The opposite situation can occur, where we may have a response to inter-sonic meanings which involves unfamiliarity, bewilderment, boredom or other similar states, but a response to delineated meanings which involves liking, belonging, a sense of the music supporting our identity, or other such generally pleasant states. This type of response would also lead to ambiguity, but of a different quality.

Using this theory to interpret musical experiences, we suggest that students stand a greater chance of engaging critically with music when their responses to its inter-sonic

meanings are competent and knowing. This puts them in the position of a listener with “open ears” who can come to know the music from the inside. Additionally, a student who might otherwise dismiss certain music through an alienated experience can be brought to question the nature of their experience itself through becoming competent with deciphering its inter-sonic relationships. In Marxist and Freirean theory, the oppressed person ceases to be alienated, not only through the material throwing off of the oppressive conditions that alienate him or her, but initially through the throwing off of the “false consciousness” that is involved in the acceptance of the alienation in the first place. When the person becomes more able to understand the processes that are causing the alienation, they have taken the first steps towards what is needed materially to throw off the alienation. This involves a dialectical process between knowledge, or what here is referred to as musical “competence”, and alienation. Such an understanding is consonant with Freire's interpretation of the power of education, knowledge and understanding to challenge alienation. Furthermore, greater competence with responding to inter-sonic meanings involves coming to understand that what we previously took to be immutable and unchangeable is actually socially and historically constructed, which is another vital aspect in the path towards throwing off alienation. For through such paths, students can come to understand that musical meanings are socially and historically constructed at not only the delineated but also the inter-sonic levels (see also Green, 2005).

Many music educators would agree that students’ responses and attention to what we are here calling inter-sonic meanings can be enhanced when they are engaged in music-making itself (see Elliott, 1995). An engagement that, we have argued, is particularly inclusive and particularly direct occurs within the proposed practices based on informal learning. Furthermore, we do not assume that in being allowed to choose their own music to work on, students are necessarily free from a range of influences including delineations

directed by the media. However, their direct engagement with the inter-sonic materials of music has led to students questioning the delineations imposed on certain music by the mass media, which they had previously not questioned:

... pupils' engagement with inter-sonic musical meanings enables them to recognize the *arbitrariness* of delineations; or in other words, the notion that delineations are not fixed entities belonging to sonic musical properties and their inter-relationships, but are socially constructed associations that arise from the ways music is *used* in different cultural contexts. (Green, 2008a, p. 91, emphasis in original)

Being aware of the arbitrariness of musical delineations and alert to the uses of music in different contexts are examples of a more critical engagement with music that might help students realize that, as Freire (1970) would remind us, we are both “*in and with the world*” (p. 452, emphasis in original). That is, because we engage with the world, including the musical world, and reflect upon the world and upon that engagement, we are potentially able to transform both the world and ourselves, being conscious of and responsible for our choices and decisions. Informal music learning practices, in this sense, can be a critical and also potentially a liberating musical experience.

### **Informal Music Pedagogy in a Teacher Education Distance Learning Module**

This section illustrates our discussion with contrasting examples of informal learning practices taken from an eight-week module offered three times as an action-research project within the context of the Open University of Brazil/University of Brasília. The module was part of a distance education program that offers initial music teacher education (Narita, 2010;

2012)<sup>3</sup>. The practices are discussed in relation to the original project carried out within secondary school music classrooms in the UK (Green, 2008a, 2014).

According to Zeichner and Flessner (2009, p. 25), social justice teacher education is a term loosely used when there is an intention to educate teachers who embrace a progressive agenda. Despite its loose use, the authors point to some practices that drive social justice teacher education: they go beyond a celebration of diversity; they encourage teachers' agency; and "give prospective teachers the practical tools that they need to transform their good intentions into effective actions" (Zeichner & Flessner, 2009, p. 27).

In order to give prospective teachers such practical tools, teacher education needs to provide opportunities for student teachers to enact and live the notions of social justice to which they may already subscribe, or which they are being asked to consider subscribing to. In the informal music learning module offered by the Open University of Brazil/University of Brasília, as with the Musical Futures teacher training programs, student teachers were asked to enact what their school students would later be asked to do: get into groups, copy a song by ear and play the music as a band. Narita, as a researcher and a supervisor teacher, together with the associate tutors (who assist, interact and assess the student teachers via online activities) and the local tutors (who assist and organize the face-to-face activities), observed them, allowed them to negotiate their ideas among their peers and, only later, intervene with guidance, suggestions, modeling and other practices. Below we discuss how these musical practices were taken into schools by the student teachers in this program.

### **Musical practice as teaching practice**

This module had musical practices geared towards training for the students' teaching practices. These were organized and structured with the intention of facilitating first hand informal learning practices for the student teachers, while helping them design pedagogical materials to be used with their school students. The materials consisted of audio tracks of a chosen song broken into layers or riffs and, sometimes, some form of notation to support the practice: indication of chords, some rhythmic patterns, and lyrics. The preparation of such materials required both musical and pedagogical skills since the student teachers needed to think about their school students' musical abilities and the appropriateness of each riff or musical line to be learned by ear: avoiding too long musical phrases and big interval leaps, for instance.

In this sense, the whole process of devising the pedagogical materials required student teachers to think about their school students' musical worlds. This process of devising the pedagogical materials required what Shulman (1987) calls forms of transformation, in which the teacher "moves from personal comprehension to preparing for the comprehension of others" (p. 16). The creation of a musical arrangement, specifically breaking the song into layers accessible for their school students, was mentioned by some student teachers as one of the learning outcomes. In Ari's<sup>4</sup> words:

I think we have to be more observant and put ourselves in learners' shoes, analyzing more carefully the stages of their development. When devising these materials, you have to forget what you already know and think: "If I was starting now how to learn this piece of music, what would the best way be? What would help me in this moment?" So, that's the reflection I got from this [module]; I think it gave us more structure to our pedagogical practice: [we had to] reflect on which material we would

use, how it would be presented, the space, a better systematization. And you're even more prepared for improvisations, for the things that happen during the lesson.

(Group interview: First offer – 23<sup>rd</sup> Sept 2011)

The musical practices of devising the pedagogical materials also provided student teachers with opportunities to deepen their understandings of the inter-sonic meanings of the chosen song, allowing student teachers to better tailor the materials for their school students, ensuring that the materials themselves would be accessible and inclusive. Thus, before informal learning practices were taken into classrooms, participatory parity had to be considered and planned in a way that the materials would not privilege certain groups of students with a specific ability and restrict the participation of others. Rather, the materials should allow room for negotiation of abilities and inclusion of every participant in the musical practice, with each one working at their own level according to their prior experiences and needs.

Once the pedagogical materials were approved, student teachers went into schools. The teaching practice with their school students was based not so much on the fullest informal learning, but on Green's (2008a) Stage 2, that is, rather than choosing the songs themselves and working on whole, "real-world" songs, the school students received the materials, got into their friendship groups, tried to play the song using the available resources and made their own versions of the song. Although they did not choose their song, when they were asked to make their own versions of the given song, the school students could still voice their musical worlds and affirm their musical identities. Both the first author and the tutors who assisted her wanted to make clear to the student teachers that music teaching should provide for learners a direct contact with music making.

The view of musical practice as a teaching practice was seen by a respondent from the third offer of the module as “an attractive way to effectively involve learners with music,” and can be summarized by the following statement:

The musical practice is the moment in which we put into practice everything we have studied, based on theoretical and pedagogical underpinnings. In the moment of the practice, the teacher must be confident about its content and prepared for any change during the lesson.

(Anonymous online module evaluation questionnaire: Third Offer – Oct 2012)

By observing the school students’ musical practice, it was possible to analyze the student teachers’ approaches to teaching. In the third offer of the module teaching practices were assessed by video snippets of around 20 minutes. While it could be argued that the snippets do not represent what “really” happened, they do represent what the student teachers wanted to show. In that sense they were potentially biased; but in a different sense, they were authentic replications of idealized identities and outcomes from the student teachers’ perspectives.

Although the student teachers were advised to stand back and, firstly, observe what the school students were attempting, and only then start to make intervention as musical models, some could not do this. Thus, their school students’ musical practice reflected the student teachers’ pedagogical choices. Differently from what had been proposed, some student teachers adopted controlled and instructional practices that resembled the “banking model of education,” in which the teacher is the “owner” of the knowledge to be deposited into learners’ heads (Freire, 2000/1970).

In Nando's lesson, he was in control of his group all the time: he distributed the lyrics of the song and played the CD; then he asked questions about the musical style, its structure and played track by track of his prepared material, asking the school students which instrument they could hear. He asked his students to clap some of the rhythmic patterns and, only after that, he allowed them to get the instruments. In his reflections, he wrote:

After listening to all the tracks, I asked them to reproduce the rhythm they had just heard, the way they wanted, without my help, whilst I was only an observer. The text [we read] mentions the initiative of the students to organize, to suggest, to be a spontaneous leader, which didn't happen in my group. So, each one played their own way, without pulse, tempo, ... I had to intervene because in spite of having percussion lessons for a year, the students didn't have the minimum basic knowledge to do this task by themselves.

(Nando's Reflections 1: Third Offer – 4<sup>th</sup> Oct 2012)

Nando's account demonstrates that he used this approach as an aural-skill test rather than a holistic musical practice. It also suggests that, as with many of the highly experienced teachers using this approach for the first time in Green's research (2008a), he had a view of his students as being "incapable" rather than "capable." Teachers in Green's research repeatedly stated how this activity had made them aware they had previously expected too little of their students, and that their student were more capable than they had realized. Nando's attitude toward testing his students and considering that they "didn't have the minimum basic knowledge" also corresponds to Freire's banking education, in which the teacher deposits knowledge into learners' minds as if they were empty vessels to be filled with the knowledge brought by the teacher. In terms of that student teacher's use of his

authority, we could say that his controlled actions prevailed over school students' choices, there was misrecognition of school students' knowledge, and the musical practice represented the student teacher's values.

Another teaching approach adopted by some other student teachers was termed "laissez-faire." In those cases, there was no intervention of the student teachers and their school students were left doing whatever they wanted to. As Freire would remind us, "Teachers ... have an ethical obligation to be 'biased', that is, to direct their teaching towards the construction of a just and humane society" (cited in McCowan, 2006, p. 68). Thus, student teachers' over-exaggerated lack of intervention in the laissez-faire approach contributes to a domesticating practice in which they neutralize school students' initiatives by not establishing a dialogical relation with them. In fact, these two apparently opposite approaches – that of Nando and that of the laissez-faire students – both lead to domestication exactly because of the lack of dialogue between the participants in the learning process.

The liberating practices identified in other student teachers' actions across the three offers of the module did contain evidence of a dialogical relation among the participants, student teachers' intervention as musical models, and the recognition and representation of the musical values and identities of both student teachers and school students. Student teachers such as Priscila supported the exploration of the musical instruments while also making interventions, suggesting ways of putting the song together and, thus, establishing a dialogical interaction with her students. By giving her students opportunities to find out and develop their own capabilities, Priscila started valuing more the process of learning and teaching instead of focusing only on the musical performance as a final product of her lessons.

If creativity and self-knowledge are important capabilities to be developed in school, there's nothing more interesting than allowing students to discover their capabilities. I was lucky to introduce a song that called their attention and I was surprised with one of the groups because they really committed themselves: they changed the rhythm of the song, used elements of funk, and even choreographed their singing and playing. I was very anxious and worried about the outcomes, but I realised that the group work, the sharing of experiences and the value of self-knowledge were more valid than the final presentation.

(Priscila's Reflections 2: Third Offer – 7<sup>th</sup> Oct 2012)

It is worth remembering that we do not assume that the musical choices of school-age students are exempt from influences of the media. As Woodford (2005) warns, "The commodification of popular music and culture serves the interests of corporations and not children" (p. 68). Thus, students' choices cannot be taken to be some expression of "freedom" but are rather, a rich starting point for the Freirean idea of problem-posing, or problematization. According to Freire (1974), "The process of problematization is basically someone's reflection on a content which results from an act, or reflection on the act itself in order to act better together with others within the framework of reality" (p. 154). In his view, the problematization, in conjunction with a dialogical relationship, would allow the development of critical consciousness ("conscientization") to liberate people to fulfill their roles as learners, educators, citizens and, mainly, as human beings in the fullest sense of the term. This also corresponds with our earlier argument that direct engagement with musical materials leading to a positive experience of inter-sonic meanings, can underpin a more critical engagement with music, since students' ears are "opened" and they are therefore in a better position to "know" what they are listening to.

## **Some Reflections**

We have argued that teaching for social justice in the music classroom and in teacher-education requires awareness of the various musical values, knowledge and identities that both learners and teachers bring into a learning situation and that need to be (re)negotiated to allow parity of participation. We have also advocated a dialogical relation to enable this (re)negotiation. However, it is worth remembering that dialogical approaches do not ensure an “automatic” conscientization resulting in liberating people and achieving social justice. Freire (1974) alerts us that there is a stage of “naïve transitivity,” when “the developing capacity for dialogue is still fragile and capable of distortion” (p. 18). Conscientization, or critical transitive consciousness, can be achieved through a critical engagement with the worlds we inhabit, aiming for personal transformation that empowers us to be “beings for ourselves” instead of “beings for others” (Freire, 2000/1970, p. 74).

A critical engagement with musical worlds may be achieved when we understand musical meanings and are thus capable of making informed choices in relation to our musical experiences. Transformative actions, such as informal learning practices, can produce ways of engagement with music making that are not in themselves new, but that have been overlooked in many formal music education settings until recently and that can be a potential way to enhance critical musical engagement. Accompanying such transformative actions, we have highlighted the importance of problematizing and critically analyzing our actions and those of our student teachers and school students, so that we do not forget that cultural, historical, economical, political and ideological contexts are implicit in our own choices and assumptions.

Going beyond the reflection on our practices, Moore (2012, p. 124-125) reminds us not only to question our actions, but the motives we had to lead to those actions, in an attitude of reflexivity.

Through a closer examination of one's responses in the context of one personal history and its interface with life in the classroom, reflexivity seeks to explain and critique not just classroom situations but the ways in which we are constrained to experience and respond to them. Reflexivity directs the practitioner to acknowledge the complex nature of *the self* and the way in which selves are constructed through experience and through social structures. (Moore, 2012, p. 136, emphasis in original)

Therefore, through reflective and reflexive attitudes, both teachers and learners at all levels can examine our actions, and potentially better understand our selves, empowering us to renegotiate and transform our values and ideals.

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#### Notes:

1. For a few of the most recent examples of classroom action in schools and teacher-education, out of many possible ones, see Chua 2013a, 2013b; Chua & Ho, 2013a, 2013b; Costes-Onish, 2013; Feichas, 2010; Finney and Philpott, 2010; Gower, 2012; Ho, 2013a, 2013b; Karlsen, 2010; McPhail, 2012, 2013; O'Neill & Bospflug, 2012; Vakeva, 2010; Wright & Kanellopoulos, 2010.
2. Originally referred to as "inherent" meaning; Green has occasionally changed the term (e.g. 2005, 2008a) as it had lead some readers to assume this meaning was regarded as "essential", although clearly no meaning can logically be essential since all meaning must be interpreted in a mind. Rather the term inherent referred to the notion that both signifier and referent were inherent in the musical materials. However the term "inter-sonic" is newer and, we hope, clearer.

3. The empirical research was carried out by Flávia Narita as part of a PhD program at the Institute of Education, University of London (UK), with the collaboration of the Open University of Brazil/University of Brasília, funded by the Capes Foundation, Ministry of Education of Brazil.

4. The names used here are pseudonyms.

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